



City of Santa Barbara

City Administrator's Office

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August 19, 2008

The Honorable J. William McLafferty
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Santa Barbara, CA 93121

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County Civil Grand Jury
Attn: Foreman Ted Sten
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Dear Honorable McLafferty:

This letter is in response to the Civil Grand Jury's letter dated June 12, 2008; requesting a response to its 2007-2008 report titled, *Anti-Gang Efforts in the City of Santa Barbara: Who's in Charge?* Attached please find the City of Santa Barbara's response pursuant to the requirements of California Penal Code Section 933.05.

The attached response was approved by the Santa Barbara City Council on Tuesday, August 19, 2008. In considering a response, the Councilmembers applauded the Grand Jury for producing such a high quality report. The information in the Summary was well researched, accurate and well written. The Findings and Recommendations were definitive, on-point and timely with respect to our on-going coordination work with other agencies and community groups.

Also, the City Council would like to give special recognition to three members of the Civil Grand Jury: Gwen Rigby, Gerry Mason, and Oscar Sepulveda. Their attendance and active participation in the bi-weekly meetings of the City's Strategy Planning Committee was truly extraordinary. The members raised issues, offered ideas, and demonstrated the kind of commitment that is necessary to be successful in reducing youth gang violence.

The City's only major difference of opinion with the Grand Jury's Report is with Finding 1 and Recommendation 1 having to do with the City of Santa Barbara's role in providing leadership for the coordination of community programs directed toward at-risk youth. We have struggled with this issue and have concluded that the central point for coordination and collaboration needs be provided by a south coast regional entity.

Our position on this is based on our work over the past months with other government agencies and community groups. Through this work we have come to recognize that many of the problems associated with youth gang violence are regional in nature. In addition we have found that the scope of work by most all of the agencies and community programs is carried out regionally and in many cases countywide. If a permanent commission or commissioner within the City organization were to take on a leadership role as recommended by the Grand Jury, we would have little effect on addressing the problems outside our City limits. We believe that the Grand Jury members who participated in our bi-weekly meetings would have reached that same conclusion had their involvement not been suspended due to the timeline for producing the Report.

The organizational structure that is being recommended for implementation to institutionalize our long term strategies and provide the necessary funding streams to support it is scheduled to be presented to the City's Strategy Planning Committee at a public meeting on September 8, 2008. While this recommendation is a "work in progress" we believe that it is responsive to the Grand Jury's request to establish a lead agency to oversee coordination and collaboration of all community programs directed toward at-risk youth. We urge the Grand Jury to review and consider this recommended organizational structure and other program recommendations that will be coming forward in the next few months.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond. Should you have any additional questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very Truly,

Jim Armstrong
City Administrator

Attachment(s)

Cc: Mayor and City Councilmembers
Steve Wiley, City Attorney
Cam Sanchez, Police Chief
Nancy Rapp, Parks and Recreation Director
Marcelo Lòpez, Administrative Services Director
Don Olson, Special Projects Manager
Cyndi Rodriguez, City Clerk

Anti-Gang Efforts in the City of Santa Barbara
Grand Jury Report – Responses
August 19, 2008

- **Finding 1:** There is no lead agency responsible for the coordination of the efforts to combat youth violence.
 - **Response:** The City agrees with this finding. There are many agencies that have different but overlapping roles and legal mandates. Some coordination efforts do exist but they tend to be informal or ad hoc. However, there is very strong interest from all involved to improve communication and coordination.
- **Recommendation 1:** The Santa Barbara City Council should establish a permanent commission or select a commissioner to oversee the coordination of all community programs directed toward at-risk youth.
 - **Response:** Beginning last December with City Council support, the City Administrator has provided leadership to convene key agencies and community-based organizations and to facilitate development of strategies that engage these parties in improving communication, coordination, and long-term collaboration. The City has provided this leadership over the past nine months and will continue to do so as the work evolves to the establishment of a regional entity that will provide leadership and oversight for the long-term. A draft structure for this regional entity is tentatively scheduled to be presented for review and comment in early September 2008.

The City believes the envisioned regional entity needs to be comprised of and supported by the County of Santa Barbara, the cities of Goleta, Carpinteria, and Santa Barbara, and by the various agencies, which have mandated roles to address youth violence, along with representatives from community based non-profit service providers, the philanthropic and faith communities, and the business sector.

As stated in the Grand Jury's Report, there are many youth gangs in neighborhoods throughout the south coast area from Isla Vista to Carpinteria. Within the last nine months, the City has come to recognize that many of the problems associated with youth gang violence are regional in nature.

In addition, the City has found that the scope of work by most of the agencies and community programs is carried out regionally and in many cases countrywide. County agencies and the Santa Barbara County Education Office have mandates to address youth violence countywide. The Santa Barbara High School District has schools that serve residents from the cities of Santa Barbara and Goleta as well as from the County's unincorporated areas from Montecito to Ellwood. The Carpinteria Unified School District serves residents in the City of Carpinteria and the unincorporated areas of the eastern portion of the south coast. The community based non-profit organizations, which sponsor programs

and services directed toward at-risk youth, operate regionally, for the most part, serving youth from throughout the south coast area.

All of the above mentioned factors demonstrate that leadership and oversight of coordination efforts should be provided by a south coast regional entity rather than a commission or commissioner appointed by the Santa Barbara City Council. If a permanent commission or commissioner within the City organization were to take on a leadership role as recommended by the Grand Jury, we would have little effect on addressing the problems outside our City limits. We believe that the Grand Jury members who participated in our bi-weekly meetings would have reached that same conclusion had their involvement not been suspended due to the timeline for producing the report.

The organizational structure that is being recommended for implementation to institutionalize our long term strategies and provide necessary funding streams to support it is scheduled to be presented to the City's Strategy Planning Committee on Youth Violence on September 8, 2008. While this recommendation is a "work in progress," we believe that it is responsive to the Grand Jury's request to establish a lead agency to oversee coordination and collaboration of all community programs directed towards at-risk youth. We urge the Grand Jury to review and consider this recommended organizational structure and other program recommendations that will be coming forward in the next few months.

- **Finding 2:** The demise of many successful programs is due to their dependence on grants, which are not a dependable source of funding.
 - **Response:** The City agrees that grants from government agencies and private foundations tend to be unreliable over the long term. However, the City does not have factual information to lead us to agree or disagree that this was the reason some programs were discontinued.
- **Recommendation 2:** The City of Santa Barbara should identify and maintain a sustainable base level of financial support for law enforcement and at-risk youth programs.
 - **Response:** The City has achieved this recommendation in the short term but ultimately police enforcement, recreation programs and other City programs that address youth gang violence are vulnerable to short falls in revenue received by the City. Sustainable long term funding for these programs are needed and will necessitate a political will to find new sources of funding.

The staffing, facilities, and operational costs associated with the Police Department, along with the Fire Department, have and continue to be the highest priorities for funding from the City's General Fund which relies on revenue from property taxes, sales taxes, utility-users taxes, and transient occupancy (hotel bed) taxes. Revenue from these sources will vary from year to

year depending on economic conditions. Police and Fire Department budgets combined represent over 50% of the General Fund.

Funding for the City's at-risk youth programs has increased annually over the past ten years as new and expanded programs are established through the Police Activities League and the Parks and Recreation Department. The sources of revenue for these activities are varied both in terms of funding levels and tenure.

With respect to securing sustainable funding for at-risk youth programs operated by other government agencies and community based organizations, the City believes that this challenge lies with the community as a whole. The regional entity described above in Finding 1 and Recommendation 1, once formed, should be very helpful in promoting more stable funding streams for these important activities and programs.

- **Finding 3:** In many cases parents do not have the skills or experience to deal with their at-risk children.
 - **Response:** The City agrees with this finding based on our direct experience in providing services and from feedback received from parents during community meetings held last year following the stabbing death of a young boy in March of 2007.
- **Recommendation 3:** Schools and law enforcement need to partner with community groups that provide counseling and classes for parents.
 - **Response:** The City agrees with this recommendation. We are currently partnering with the schools and community groups and will continue to promote expanded partnerships to provide increased availability of counseling and classes for parents. In some respects, the limited support available to parents may be our community's weakest link as parents have a very important role in prevention and intervention.
- **Finding 4:** The Police Department reactivated bike patrols in the spring of 2007 in response to public outcry.
 - **Response:** The City agrees with this finding. The City Council allocated additional funding to the Police Department in the spring of 2007 for expanded hours by the bike patrol in neighborhoods which were experiencing increased levels of youth gang activity. Council's action was in response to a recommendation from the Police Chief with support from the City Administrator. Members of the community spoke in favor of this recommendation.
- **Recommendation 4:** The Police Department should continue to fund the bike patrol, even if the violence subsides.
 - **Response:** The City agrees with this recommendation and is committed to finding the resources to continue operation of the bike patrol unit.

The bike patrol was discontinued a few years ago due to fiscal constraints, reduced police officer staffing levels, and a management decision to allocate available resources to other police operations. Our financial resources and staffing levels have improved.

The bike patrol has proven to be an effective tool in our response to youth gang violence. It has also proven to be effective tool as part of our communication network with residents and businesses.

- **Finding 6:** Most gang activity happens after school and off school campuses.
 - **Response:** The City agrees with this finding.
- **Recommendation 6a:** Schools and law enforcement should continue to work in concert and focus on safety zones beyond the school campuses.
 - **Response:** The City agrees with this recommendation and will continue our long-standing partnership with our schools. Safe school campuses, safe neighborhoods, and a safe community are all a high priority.
- **Finding 8:** The Santa Barbara School Districts have not implemented a district-wide tip line.
 - **Response:** The City has been informed by Santa Barbara High School District's staff that a district-wide tip line is currently being established.
- **Recommendation 8:** The Santa Barbara School Districts, in partnership with law enforcement should establish and promote a telephone tip line.
 - **Response:** The telephone tip-line being installed by the Santa Barbara High School District will be accessible from all high school and junior high school campuses within the District's jurisdiction which spans the City of Santa Barbara, the City of Goleta and unincorporated areas from Montecito to Ellwood. Reports received on the tip line will be screened by school officials and then forwarded to either City of Santa Barbara Police Department or to the County Sheriff depending on which school campus is involved. The tip line is scheduled to be operational by the start of the 2008-2009 school year. As the hardware becomes operational, School Districts staff will convene a meeting with the Santa Barbara City Police Department and County Sheriff to formalize the protocols that will be followed by the School Districts staff when referring reports received on the tip line.